

# IN THE WORKS

*TUNE IN HERE FOR NEWS ABOUT PERSONNEL SYSTEM REFORM IN WASHINGTON*

*February 2004*

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## **UPDATE ON JOB CLASSIFICATION CHANGES**

One goal of civil service reform is to make the state personnel system more efficient by consolidating more than 2,400 job classes into fewer, broader classes.

The initial plan was to implement all of the job classification changes on July 1, 2005, the same date that most other Washington Works components become effective. This timeline now is being revised to give agencies and employees more time for a smoother transition.

As the full magnitude of the coming changes became more clear, agency managers and human resource staff expressed concern about the logistics and timing involved in implementing all of the Washington Works components at the same time. The classification system is one component that can be implemented in phases, rather than all at once.

In response, the Department of Personnel and the state's Labor Relations Office are developing a revised timeline for transitioning to new, consolidated job classes. Some consolidation will be done before July 2005. Further consolidation will take place in stages starting after July 2005. The timeline for transitioning to new occupational categories is still being developed.

The revised timeline will allow managers and human resource staff to better support agencies and their employees during the transition to the new system. It also will minimize the cost impact to the state, by stretching it out over time.

Both the Department of Personnel and the Labor Relations Office are committed to the shared goal of streamlining the civil service system to allow better management of state government. The Department of Personnel will continue to listen and respond to feedback on the job classification proposal. ★

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## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BEGINS

Initial ground rule discussions between the Governor's Labor Relations Office and unions representing state employees will begin late February.

Gary Moore, the state's chief labor negotiator and director of the Labor Relations Office, said the state's objectives in collective bargaining will be the same as the other Washington Works components.

Under the personnel reform law, collective bargaining is expanded to include wages and working conditions. Moore said he will seek labor contracts that support a high-performance state government.

"I look forward to the coming months as an opportunity to negotiate contracts that provide the flexibility and fairness that benefit our state workforce, agencies and the taxpayers we serve," he said.

Negotiated collective bargaining agreements are due to the Governor's Office on October 1, 2004 so they can be incorporated in the Governor's 2005-07 Budget Proposal.

The Legislature will have the role of approving or rejecting the cost of the negotiated agreements during its 2005 session. The new contracts are scheduled to take effect July 1, 2005.

## TRAINING KEY TO SUCCESS

The message has come through loud and clear from employees, managers and human resource staff throughout the state. Training will be critical to implementing the coming Washington Works changes.

That comes as no surprise to those leading the Washington Works projects.

"Training has been an important consideration from the beginning," said Christina Valadez, Assistant Director for Training and Development Services at the Department of Personnel. "We want staff to feel supported and ready to take on the challenges of a whole new system."

Planners from the Department of Personnel, Department of General Administration, Office of Financial Management and the Labor Relations Office have been busy for many months putting together a comprehensive training plan.

[An overview of the training plan](#) was rolled out in early February. The plan will continue to be modified and improved as training needs become clearer.

Some training and consulting components are available now to help agencies plan and prepare for the coming changes. Additional programs and services will be introduced this spring.

"Key training on the new rules, tools and procedures will be offered before the new system is in place to get staff prepared to make the transition," said Valadez.

Training programs will continue to be offered for as long as needed, with new programs and services added as needed. For a list of currently available training services visit the Department of Personnel's training site: [http://hr.dop.wa.gov/training/washington\\_works.htm](http://hr.dop.wa.gov/training/washington_works.htm). More training information will be available soon on the Washington Works website. ★

## CONTRACTING RULES TO BE ADOPTED

The Department of General Administration, the agency responsible for developing the rules for competitive contracting, is reviewing over 300 comments received during the public comment period about the proposed rules.

“The 300 comments we received varied from general concerns about the process to some precise analyses,” said Rob Fukai, director of General Administration.

The six-week comment period, which included five public hearings, ended February 10.

A concise summary of the comments will accompany the rule adoption filing, currently scheduled for March 17.

Prior to the rule adoption filing, General Administration will examine the comments

to determine if anything contained in the comments should result in changes to the proposed rules.

“We’ll need some time to sort through them,” Fukai said. “We’ve heard from a ton of people and gotten great input from everyone involved. We’re appreciative of the participation in the process.”

Comments received during the public comment period are in addition to the several hundred submitted months earlier in the rule-development process.

The department met for months around the state with more than 800 representatives from business, labor, government and the public.

More information is available at:

<http://www.ga.wa.gov/competitivecontracting/index.html> ★

## COMMENT INVITED ON DRAFT LAYOFF RULES

The Department of Personnel invites employees to review and comment on [draft rules covering layoff and separation](#). Employees may provide feedback online, through email or through their human resource office. The comment period runs through March 15.

This group of rules includes subjects such as reduction in force (RIF) procedures, layoff options and review periods for employees who are hired off of layoff lists. These rules will apply fully to classified employees who are not in bargaining units. They may be superseded by collective bargaining agreements for employees who are in bargaining units.

As part of Washington Works, the rules governing virtually all aspects of the civil service system are being rewritten and simplified to support modern personnel practices. The rules are being rolled out by subject matter over the course of six months (January-June 2004), with a comment period of approximately three weeks for each set of rules. The [rules review schedule](#) lists the comment periods for rules on specific subjects.

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## GETTING READY FOR NEW COMPUTER SYSTEM

The Human Resource Management System (HRMS), which will replace the state's central payroll/personnel computer system, is moving forward on schedule. According to Brian Turner, project manager, "I am confident that the hardware and software systems will be in place and ready to go on time. For the transition to be as smooth as possible, we also need to make sure that agencies and end users are ready for the changes."

The HRMS Change Management Team is dedicated to helping agencies and end users understand and prepare for the coming changes. One tool they are using is a monthly readiness assessment survey, which monitors each agency's progress and identifies issues.

The first surveys were submitted in mid-January. The results showed that most agencies are on track. They also helped identify specific areas where some agencies need support. The HRMS team is working with these agencies to address issues and provide assistance where needed.

Agency communications are another important factor in making a smooth transition to the new system. To help agencies with internal communications, the HRMS team will provide agency contacts with guidelines and templates that can help organize and document communications.

More information about HRMS is available on the project web site at <http://hrms.dop.wa.gov>. ★

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